

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Christmas ad campaign in full swing

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

It was about this time last year that the idea came to Ian Richardson, communications services director at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

"I was riding along in my vehicle, listening to Christmas music on the radio, thinking about all the hustle and bustle, and it occurred to me once again how far we have drifted away from the true meaning of Christmas. I wanted to come up with a way to bring the focus back to the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, where the focus should be in the first place," he said.

The former television producer and director went to work writing the script and lining up everything he would need to create the "Christmas is... Jesus" television spot that was broadcast during Christmas 2007 and eventually garnered top honors from the group Southern Baptist Communicators.

The television spot features a typical Mississippi family at Christmas, stretched to the limit with too many holiday activities and too little time to think about the real reason for the season. As mom and dad rush around the house trying to get everything together, their young son watches with interest and finally says, "What about the Baby Jesus?"

"The statement, 'Christmas is...', can be completed with dozens of different thoughts," said MBCB Executive Director Jim Futral. "It is lights. It is songs. It is parties, families, and festivities that seem to be lined up one right after another — but the awesome power and simplicity of

Christmas may be found in the simple statement, 'Christmas is... Jesus.' I am reminded of Paul's exclamation about our wonderful Lord as he said, 'Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.'

"There is a marvelous sense that while Christmas is Jesus, New Year's is Jesus, Easter is Jesus, Sunday is Jesus, and for the believer every moment and every breath is Jesus."

Richardson shot the television ad in the home of Dale and Suellen McPhail, members of First Church, Madison, with the assistance of Don Warren, a member of Country Woods Church, Byram, and owner of Don Warren Film and Video in Jackson.

Warren recruited Country Woods Church members Chad and Shanon Shealy of Raymond to portray the mom and dad, as well as Erin Linley of Florence and Chip Pratt of Clinton to portray the children.

To hold down expenses, the staff of the MBCB Communication Services Department pitched in and handled production duties such as makeup and the set-up and take-down of props and equipment. Those staffers included Bo Price, Judy Chen, Wanda Randall, Gordon Griffin, Diane Defore, Jerome Hobson, and Matt Broome.

After a full day of taping, Richardson returned to the video editing suite at the Baptist Building in Jackson and began putting the 30-second spot together on the convention board's Avid video editing system. The finished product was then shipped to 10 Mississippi television stations and one Memphis television station (to cover northwest Mississippi).

The television campaign resulted in enough positive feedback that the decision was made to air the commercial again this year during the Christmas season, according to Richardson.

The 2008 campaign also went multi-media, with a bumper sticker and outdoor billboard buy drawn from a "still capture" off the television ad. When the initial run of 10,000 bumper stickers was quickly exhausted at the 2008 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in October, plans were quickly made to order more bumper stickers and make them available through Mississippi Baptist churches.

The bumper stickers must be ordered through Mississippi Baptist churches and will be shipped only to Mississippi Baptist church addresses. The first 100 bumper stickers ordered are free, including shipping and handling on the initial order, and must be ordered in multiples of 25.

Additional bumper stickers are available at cost for 22 cents each with free shipping and handling, and must also be ordered in multiples of 25 and mailed to the address of a Mississippi Baptist church.

All orders must be placed through the MBCB web site, [www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org), where the order forms can be found. For more information, contact Richardson at [irichardson@mbcb.org](mailto:irichardson@mbcb.org).

"I didn't start out to make a television spot that would win awards and be so popular; I just wanted to honor Jesus Christ at this very special time of the year. As it turned out, the spot did win an award and was very popular — and Jesus still received the honor. I'm most pleased with that part," Richardson said.

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MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

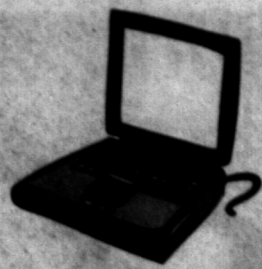
NOW AVAILABLE — The "Christmas is... Jesus," bumper-sticker can be ordered by members churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. The bumper sticker is drawn from the television spot currently being broadcast around the state. (Special)

# CHRISTMAS IS... JESUS

MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS







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# 'Tis the season for Christian-bashing

It's the most wonderful time of the year, according to the 1963 Johnny Mathis hit song written by Eddie Pola and George Wyle.

I, too, thought the song was much older but Google, that limitless fount of information for the Internet Age, proved me wrong once again. Nonetheless, it is indeed a wonderful time of the year with all the shopping, festive music, sparking colors, gift-giving, and Christian-bashing.

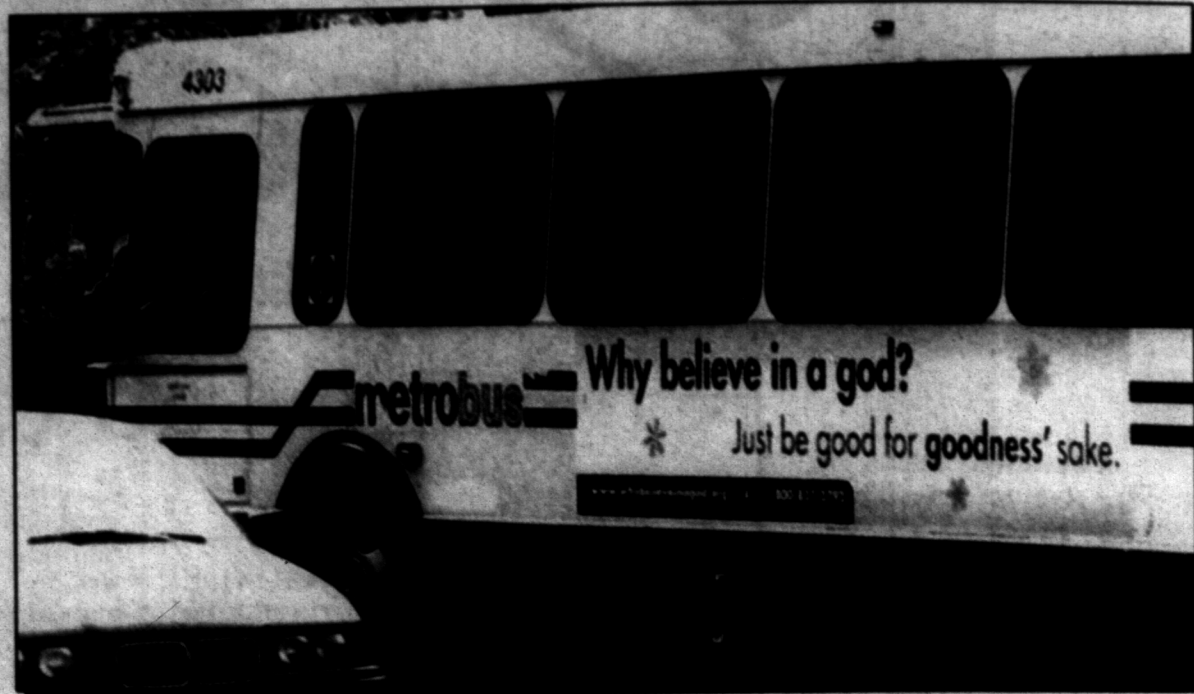
Christian-bashing? Yes, Christian-bashing. While most Americans seem content to ignore the real reason for the season — the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ — certain groups around the country are intent on bringing the focus back to Jesus, albeit in a perverse sort of way.

The American Humanist Association (AHA) is the proud sponsor of a city bus ad campaign in Washington, D.C., during this Christmas season that has as its centerpiece the slogan, "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake."

"It's clearly a message that a lot of people are ready to hear: that you don't need a god to be good," said Roy Speckhardt, AHA executive director.

To the south, Florida Gulf Coast University President Wilson Bradshaw attempted to ban all religious displays this year on the school's Fort Myers campus, but quickly backpedaled when confronted by strong student and faculty criticism. The fact that he permitted Halloween decorations on campus apparently didn't help his argument all that much.

"I still intend to convene the representative group of faculty, staff and students during 2009 to discuss these issues and to develop opportunities for the University community to learn more about each



other's traditions — not only in December, but throughout the year," Bradshaw said.

Whatever that means in academia-speak, at least it's a start.

Proponents of homosexual rights have also chosen believers on which to vent their fury over the failures of their political agendas on Election Day.

Homosexual rights activists recently disrupted a worship service at Mt. Hope Church in Delta Township, Michigan, when they began shouting slogans and tossing flyers around the worship center. The chaotic protest also included a pair of women who rushed to the front of the church and engaged in a passionate kiss before the entire congregation.

A tape of the incident can be viewed by going to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and searching for "Gays attack church," but be forewarned, it's not for the faint of heart.

Likewise, a California grandmother had a cross ripped from her hands and torn apart when she showed up in opposition to a California homosexual rights rally organized to protest Prop 8, which banned same sex marriage in that state when it passed on Election Day. She was reportedly spat upon as she was hounded from the rally.

A tape of that incident can also be viewed at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Search for "Violent Protesters Attack Pro-Traditional Marriage Woman, Stomp on her Cross."

As our country becomes more secular in the coming years, be prepared to endure heightened criticism — and even violence — as the true meaning of Christmas is pushed farther and farther into the background. Christians should brace themselves for more such attacks at other times of the year, too.

Take heart, though. We already know how all of this is going to turn out in the end.

## GUEST OPINION:

### Living out our priorities

By Wanda S. Lee, exec. director  
Woman's Missionary Union  
Birmingham, Al.

hear the message of Christ. They realized that God was calling them to use whatever gifts and skills they had to open doors for sharing their faith — and they went.

That's why we focus so much attention each December on international missions through the International Missions Emphasis. It is often said that what people know about, they pray for more regularly, and what they pray for often becomes the impetus for giving of their resources.

During this season of prayer and giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, we each have the privilege of supporting these

missionaries and thousands of others by providing critical resources that enable them to live God's call.

When my husband and I were appointed as international missionaries, it was the direct result of trying to help our church know more and care more about the needs of the world. Through teaching in the missions organizations, committing to a full week of praying during the Week of Prayer, and hosting the International Mission Study each year, our church became a stronger supporter of international missions.

When we asked the church to pray that God would call someone to career missions from our church, they did just

that. What they didn't count on was that my husband Larry and I would be the ones God called — but what a testimony to the power of a praying church and to a church committed to impacting their world for Christ.

The testimonies I shared in the beginning of this article are from people who experienced positive missions learning and involvement opportunities through their churches as well. The schedule of activities and the budget allocations of our churches speak volumes about where our priorities lie.

If we commit to teach children about missions, they will grow up with a broader worldview than their friends. If we set aside money for sending kids to RA/GA camps and plan missions experiences where church families will learn the importance of missions giving, our churches will become truly missional churches.

As we enter this season of International Missions Emphasis, let's be the voice for missions learning, giving, and going in our churches so the world may come to know the Jesus we celebrate at Christmas and always.



# Professions having impact on team outlook

EAST PRAIRIE, Mo. (BP) — Not in 50 years had Friday night lights burned so brightly for East Prairie (Mo.) High School. When the East Prairie Eagles defeated archrival Charleston 46-21 on Oct. 17, it was their first victory in Charleston in a half-century.

The first words East Prairie coach Jason Aycock heard were from his pastor Jon Archie, who yelled, "This is exactly what happens when your coach gets saved."

Aycock lifted his hands into the air and praised God for the win. The stadium grew quiet. Down on the field, players had dropped to their knees in prayer.

Prayer was a hallmark of the 2008 football season in this southeast Missouri farming community. In September, evangelist Rick Gage had held a campaign in which 27 of the team's 37 players surrendered their lives to Christ. That came on the heels of a revival at Elm Street Church led by Oklahoma evangelist Clint Sinclair in which 43 made professions of faith.

Aycock has read Gage's book, *More Than A Game*, and agreed when Gage event coordinator Kerrie Stokes asked if the evangelist could speak to Aycock's team.

"What I figured is that he would talk about character, making right choices, and how to make it to the next level," Aycock said. "I didn't have a clue that he was going to the heart of the Gospel. I got very nervous. I almost grabbed Kerrie's arm and said, 'You are going to have to stop this man because of the environment we are in,' but I looked throughout the room and the kids were so engaged to Rick that I felt something come over me. I decided, 'We've come this far, you go for it. I hope every kid here gets saved today.'"

Then another thought struck Aycock. "Surely he is not going to ask kids to come up and kneel and pray," Aycock said to himself. "Surely he is just telling them about the Gospel."

Gage did lead students to pray for salvation and when he asked how many had prayed along with him, 27 young men raised their hands. "Tears came to my eyes. I was stunned," Aycock said. "We had a doggone revival in the football locker room."

Aycock said he was a "lost duck" up until a year ago. "All I cared about was winning and football," he said. "I cared about my family but God was never in the picture with me. I felt like football was my god."

As a youth, he had been dragged to Free Will Church in East Prairie by his mother Jane Aycock, he said. His brother Billy already had accepted Christ. "He always had something I wanted... that happiness and peace in his life," Aycock



**PREPARING THE TEAM** — Coach Jason Aycock talks to members of the East Prairie (Mo.) Eagles football team early in their season. In September, 27 of the team's 37 players surrendered their lives to Christ during a campaign led by evangelist Rick Gage. (BP photo by Kellie Bone, courtesy of The East Prairie Eagle newspaper)

said. "I knew it was Christ. I couldn't bring myself to do it."

An all-state defensive back in high school who went on to play college football, Aycock coached with a win-at-all-costs mentality. He would scream at his players and use foul language. He was not a players' coach.

In September 2007, however, Aycock hit an all-time low. "It was about me, me, me. I was depressed," he said. "I was not only making it bad on myself but making it bad on my wife, Mandy, and our kids."

He didn't coach in 2007 because of personal reasons. Then, one Saturday night in his workshop at home, Aycock asked Christ to be his Savior.

"I don't know where I am going. I need some direction," he prayed. "I want to ask you to forgive me of my sins. Please come into my life and let me live through you."

That night everything changed. "After I had done that all my tears were gone. I felt like a ton of bricks had been lifted off my shoulder," he said. "I felt an immediate happiness come over me. I didn't care anymore what I had done wrong or what people were thinking about me. All I cared about was I've got Jesus now."

In October 2007, Jon Archie baptized Aycock at Elm Street Church, where Archie has been pastor since 1999. "When things are good, a lot of folks don't have time for God and end up in the valley of life," Archie said. "God gets our attention. Jason was at a low place. [Now] he is a new person, a new creature in Christ."

Players making decisions for Christ brought big changes. Young men gave up bad habits,

counseled others about Christ, and prayed for unbelieving classmates. The use of curse words fell off. Most importantly, students took the initiative to pray before and after games.

"They would be the ones to say, 'Let's pray,'" Aycock said. "They would be the ones in the middle of the football field, taking a knee and praising God no matter if we won or lost. They would bow their heads and thank Him."

After the Eagles lost the district championship game to finish the season 6-4, players waited until Aycock finished media interviews to pray with him. They told him what he had been telling them: "We praise God, no matter if we win or lose."

"That totally floored me," Aycock said. "I knew right then there was a change in our team, maybe not all of them but a majority of them."

The change in the players reflected the transformation in their coach's life. "They definitely saw a change in me," Aycock said. "All of a sudden, I am calm

and collected. I didn't go crazy at halftime in the locker room. I would say, 'This is what we've got to do to correct this.' They were waiting for me to explode on them. I never did."

"Christ has won the victory when he saved my life. One of the biggest blessings was the day my wife walked down the aisle and gave her life to Christ," Aycock said. "Another thing this has given me is a Christian home. My two sons talk about Christ. They want to know Him. I pray every day that one day they receive Christ when they realize what it really means."

Aycock now coaches with the philosophy of Colossians 3:23 — working for the Lord, not for men.

"I coach for the Lord. Now when I prepare for a game, I prepare because I want to represent the Lord," he said. "Whether we win or lose, we praise God for giving us the chance to play on Friday night. It's bigger than Friday night lights because Christ is in it."

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

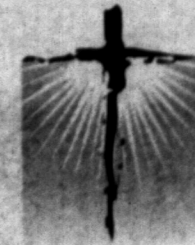
The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board promoted two long-time board employees to directorships recently, with Jim Didlake becoming director of the Brotherhood Department and Matt Buckles becoming director for the Church Administration — Pastoral Ministries Department.

### 20 years ago

Clarke College in Newton is placed on academic probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges. A spokesperson says that the Baptist-affiliated junior college failed to comply with association conditions related to planning and finances.

### 50 years ago

Parkway Church, Jackson, requested more study course awards than any other church in the Southern Baptist Convention during 1957 — 58 according to statistics recently released by the Awards Office of the Baptist Training Union Department of the Sunday School Board.



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND  
RIGHT NOW!

*Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:*

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

*"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)*

*If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.*



# BIBLIOCIPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
© 2005

ZRYXOSY, QGUO WCXV  
TVWS YOSURCY XBRX  
KBGNB GY FWYX RCM  
OHWRE; DCVKGCQ  
XBRX TO REYV BRUO R  
ZRYXOS GC BORUOC.

NVEVYGRCY PVWS:VCO

Clue: B=H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Four Four

## DON'T DROP THE BATON

In August 2008, the whole world tuned in from time to time to watch the Olympic Games in Beijing, China. The countries of the world sent their finest athletes in running, swimming, gymnastics, volleyball, and some things that I did not even understand. When it came to track and field, the U.S. had competition but they also fielded some of their greatest athletes. One event, a kind of marquee event, is the 4 x 100 relay. Clearly, the U.S. had the fastest four guys on the track. While the rest of the world brought competition, most folks were just waiting for us to go to the awards stand, receive the gold medal, listen to the Star Spangled Banner, and celebrate our victory. The gun went off and the race began. Everything was going great until one of the baton exchanges was to take place. The next runner in the relay started off with his hand behind him waiting for the baton to be placed in it, but no baton came. The exchange was fumbled and, in a race decided by tenths of a second, there was no way to catch up.

The finest, fastest athletes failed at the least important and most important part of the race. They did not pass along the baton.

In the evangelical, Christian world, Baptists have been blessed. We have been blessed

with great leaders, outstanding programs, great mission tools, and through the years a passionate spirit to reach a world for Christ. If there is one aspect of our efforts that has been uniquely and overwhelmingly blessed by God, it has been the Cooperative Program of Southern Baptists. Through it, the resources of God's people join the resources of other churches and people of God into a great stream not so much of money but of concern and love that flows to the world in the name of Jesus.

Since 1925, Southern Baptists have seen the hand of God uniquely bless and guide in undergirding our great mission program to the ends of the earth through the Cooperative Program. Now it seems as though many folks believe that the Cooperative Program is no longer significant and they do not feel any sense of loyalty or commitment to pass along that baton to the next generation.

This is no exercise in blame placing. Was the runner behind

so focused on running his race that he did not give enough attention to the handoff? Was the runner in front so intent on getting on with his race that he lost sight of those who had run before? That discussion is pointless in that both of them needed to make connection. So it is with us in relationship to our part of the Kingdom work and the impact that future generations will make on their world. If the generation finishing their part of the race fails to connect with the generation starting the race, great opportunities, magnificent victories, and marvelous celebrations will be missed.

What is at stake? Ultimately, the issue is souls to be reached for Jesus. Here in America, missiologists say that approximately 250 million people are without Christ. In the rest of the world, that figure is in the staggering billions. Can one person tackle this enormous task alone? No! Can one church do it all by itself? No! However, by joining together we have, we can, and we must make a difference. We must not drop the baton.

Right now most of our churches are prayerfully involved in participating in the focused opportunity to touch our world through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. It is the largest mission offering opportunity in all Christendom and our blessing to share Christ's love with others. Let's not drop the baton.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).



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### Registration Information

The conference cost is \$30 per person. This fee includes the conference and lunch. Special conference rates are available at area hotels. See the back of this form for more information. The deadline for conference registration is February 18, 2009.

Please register \_\_\_\_\_ persons at \$30 per person.  
(Please attach a list of the names of men who will be attending.)

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_ for the non-refundable registration fees.  
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**FEBRUARY 27-28  
BARTLETT, TN**



**GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH, BRANDON, Miss.**, is accepting resumes for a full-time minister of music and youth. We are a church of 175 that needs to be 500. If this challenge excites you, please send resume to P.O. Box 398, Brandon, MS 39043 or email to [jeff@gracebaptistonline.net](mailto:jeff@gracebaptistonline.net).

**NURSERY WORKER NEEDED: BED-BABY** room, during all services. Mail resume to Kathy Bayles, Hillcrest Baptist Church, 5950 Terry Rd., Byram, MS 39272.

**UTICA BAPTIST CHURCH, UTICA, Miss.**, is in search of a full-time pastor. Submit resumes to Utica Baptist Church, search committee, P. O. Box 205, Utica, MS 39175-0205.



What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

# HOUSE TOPS

Matthew 10:27 NAS

December 4, 2008

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.

## MISSISSIPPI BSU STUDENTS SERVING AROUND THE WORLD THIS SPRING.

Please pray for these Mississippi BSU students who will be serving the next 4-6 months through the International Mission Board Program, Hands On. For more information about this program go to the IMB website, [thetask.org/handson](http://thetask.org/handson). To send a note of encouragement to any of these students, contact Beverly Parrish, Associate Director of MBCB Collegiate Ministry. [bparrish@mbcb.org](mailto:bparrish@mbcb.org)



### MEREDITH CHRISTIAN

School: Mississippi College  
Hometown: Germantown BC, TN  
Home church: Germantown Baptist  
Serving in: **South Asia**

### SARAH FISK

School: Mississippi State  
Hometown: Deer Park, TX  
Home church: FBC, Deer Park  
Serving in: **Germany**

### DAY SMITH

School: Mississippi State  
Hometown: Columbus, MS  
Home church: FBC, Columbus  
Serving in: **Germany**

### AMANDA LUCIUS

School: University of  
Southern Mississippi  
Hometown: Brandon, MS  
Home church: Crossgates BC, Brandon  
Serving in: **East Asia**

### JAY KEYWOOD

School: University of  
Southern Mississippi  
Hometown: Hazelhurst, MS  
Home church: FBC, Hazelhurst  
Serving in: **East Asia**

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Baptist Global Response

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## 2009 STATE PRAYER SUMMIT

Morrison Heights BC, Clinton

Mark your calendars now to join the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board women's visionary team, all wMu leaders, women's commission, women's evangelism, women's enrichment ministry, men's ministry, RA leaders and all missions leaders of Area 5 for Personal Renewal.



### Special Guests

Elaine Helms

Kevin Meador



### "Enter-Mission"

Saturday, January 17

9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

State Prayer Summit

Prayerwalk, Worship Celebration, Prayer Sessions and Worship Prayer Concert

+

### "Pray-over Clinton"

9:00 a.m. Begins  
Morrison Heights BC  
10:15 a.m. Return to church  
10:30 Worship Celebration  
11:45 Lunch  
(\$5 preregistration form at [www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org))  
12:30 p.m. Prayer Sessions  
one for women & one for men  
1:30 Prayer Concert  
2:30 Adjourn

For more information, contact Beverly Parrish, Associate Director of MBCB Collegiate Ministry. [bparrish@mbcb.org](mailto:bparrish@mbcb.org)

## REMEMBER

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST

## 2009 Christian Education Clinics

February 14 ..... Highland Baptist Church, Meridian  
March 7 ..... Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Madison  
May 9 ..... Woolmarket Baptist Church, Biloxi

It is the desire of Mississippi Baptists to offer quality training for those who affect the lives of Mississippi's most precious citizens. Please make plans to attend the 2009 clinic of your choice. If you have any questions, please call.



Discipleship & Family Ministry  
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E-mail: [dhicks@mbcb.org](mailto:dhicks@mbcb.org)

Susie McNair, Clinic Coordinator  
Christian Education Clinic  
601-954-8650, E-mail: [gsmcnair@yahoo.com](mailto:gsmcnair@yahoo.com)



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## SINGLES

### Find Hope Singles' Conference Saturday, January 24, 2009

Where: First Baptist Church, Brookhaven  
Speakers: Rick Conner, Tennessee  
Times: 8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Cost: \$25 (includes continental breakfast, book, and lunch)

Sign up to register is January 19.  
Register before December 31 to receive a free T-shirt.

For more information, call 601-833-8111  
or Email: [www.findhope.org](http://www.findhope.org)

Sponsored by MBCB Discipleship and Family Ministry

## SINGLES' PURPOSE EVENT

When: Saturday, March 7  
Where: FBC, Laurel  
Speaker: Ron Mumbower  
Time: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Cost: \$5 (includes lunch)  
Break-outs: Throwing off Burdens  
Joy for the Journey  
Missions: "Block Party"

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Register before March 2 and receive a devotion book and a nice gift bag.

## State-Sponsored Evangelism Rally

Saturday, January 20, 2009

Northwest Heights Baptist Church, Clinton

President Perry Sanders former pastor of FBC, Lafayette, La.

Music Graham Smith, State Music Director, MBCB

Pianist Irene Martin, Hornsby

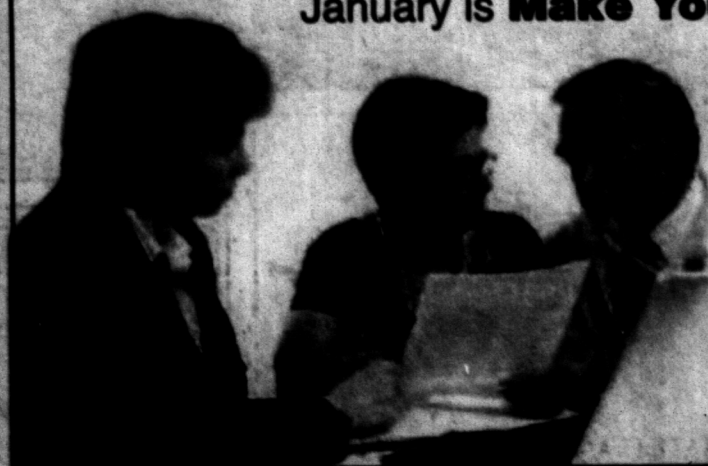
Break-outs: 5 breakfasts offered

For contact info, call Doris at 601-224-2621

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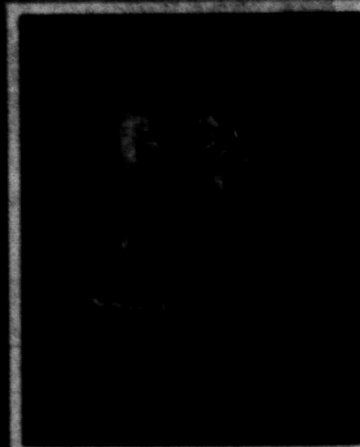
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**Acts 1:8**

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<p><b>February 9, 2009 • 9-11 a.m.</b>          First Baptist Church Lyman          14321 Old Hwy. 49, Gulfport</p>	<p><b>February 10, 2009 • 6:30-9 p.m.</b>          Longview Heights Baptist Church          4501 Goodman Road, Olive Branch</p>
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**February 10, 2009 • 9-noon**  
 Liberty Baptist Church  
 5199 Lakeland Drive, Flowood

For more info: Angie Boydston at [aboydstun@mbcb.org](mailto:aboydstun@mbcb.org) or Lee Ann Boykin at [labykin@mbcb.org](mailto:labykin@mbcb.org) or call 1-800-748-1651, ext. 292, or 601-292-3292

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## Missionary Moments Prayer Guide

**2009**

**MISSIONARY MOMENTS PRAYER GUIDE**





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# Christmas is ... Jesus!



Throughout Africa, there are social and cultural practices that contribute to the astounding AIDS pandemic. While in many countries there is almost universal awareness of HIV/AIDS and the means of transmission, there has been no significant change in behavior. Pray for the spread of the gospel and its power to change behavior through the Holy Spirit.

Muslims bear witness that God is one and that Muhammad is His final prophet. They consider Jesus as one of God's greatest prophets, but they do not accept Him as divine or as man's Redeemer and Lord. Muslims do not understand or accept God's ultimate expression of His love shown in Christ's life, death and resurrection. Pray for them to know Jesus is God.

The Mazandarani speakers of Iran number between 3 million and 4.5 million people and are almost 100 percent Shi'a Muslim, and have been for approximately 1,300 years. Pray for believers in Iran to share their witness and God's Word with the Mazandarani people. Pray for them to see the glory of God in the face of Christ and to choose to follow Him no matter what the cost.

The 2.5 million Bosniak-speaking people are Slavic Muslims who were converted to Islam nearly 600 years ago. Today many young Muslims are seeking truth and are open to hearing the Good News, but are slow to act on it. Ask God to prepare the soil of their hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit so that they will not only believe, but will produce abundant fruit as they share their faith.

**DEACON EMPHASIS WEEK (PLD emphasis)**  
Muslims believe the Holy Trinity implies belief in three gods. Ask that Muslims will hear and understand the truth that God is One in truth and One in God. Pray for them to know that He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the one creator God who longs to give them true life.

Bandung, Indonesia, is a college town. Indonesians come from all over the country to study in its universities, one of which is the nationally renowned Bandung Institute of Technology. Pray that students will come with a heart to seek Truth and will be willing to accept God's Word. Pray that campus ministries and young believers will be effective and bold in their witness.

Pray for Siyethemba Home-Based Caregivers in Mpumalanga province, South Africa, who reach out to those in their community who are living with AIDS. Pray as missionary Kyllie Peterson disciplines the caregivers, and ask that they will be a witness to their community as they grow in Christ.

Muslims focus on God's holiness, justice and power. They strive to earn His favor and entry into heaven through obedience to Islamic law, good deeds and acts of self-sacrificing devotion. Muslims live within a protective wall of laws, traditions and relationships that separates them from God's love. Pray for the Spirit of God to penetrate these walls blocking the gospel truth.

Numbering more than 2 million, most of the Gujaratis of north India are Muslims who are also involved in spiritism and saint worship. They are shepherds, living in basic isolation. Pray for the Gujarati people to have abundant opportunities to hear the stories of God's redemptive activity. Pray for them to understand and believe the Good News that God loves them and longs to make them His children.

A community development project was approved that will allow workers to build relationships and sow seeds among a Muslim people group. Pray for the team to use their time wisely while the project is being carried out, and pray that a fruitful church will be started in the village where they will be working. Ask that people in the village will have dreams and visions about Jesus, compelling them to seek Him.

Through a concentrated effort of reaching and teaching more people about Islam, their leaders are sending out their "missionaries" to other countries. The border areas of Uganda are feeling this influence. Christians in these areas are being persecuted, live in fear, and find it difficult to share God's Word. Pray for them to remain true to their walk with the Lord and to be alert to opportunities for witness.

The 25 million Malay people are one of the largest unreached people groups in the world. While half of all Malays live in Malaysia, more than 10 million are located along the east coast of Sumatra and across the southern half of Sumatra. Islam is deeply rooted in Malay culture. Pray for God to move across the entire region, resulting in communities of faith in Jesus among every group of Malays.

The customs of the African culture make it difficult for women to protect themselves against AIDS. Many women are faithful to their spouse but discover they are HIV-positive since it is culturally acceptable for men to have multiple wives and partners. Pray that these women will commit themselves to Jesus Christ and receive eternal salvation regardless of their HIV status.

Contrary to the Western idea of a happy bride, the Sindi bride is more quiet, subdued and shy. This attitude is a sign of respect to both her father (sad to leave him) and husband (submission). Pray for Sindi brides to have the opportunity to hear the Good News and personally experience Christ's love, a love that will enable them to truly and faithfully love their husband and his family.

The nearly 4 million Albanian Ghegs are predominately Muslim, although their Muslim religion is more of a cultural identity than an active expression of faith. Very few Albanian Ghegs have ever been inside a mosque. Pray for them to hear the gospel, to believe it, and to joyfully trade their "cultural faith" for a living relationship with Jesus Christ and his love, peace and joy.

Each day as a financial facilitator in West Africa walks to and from the office, he distributes cassette tapes, CDs, movies, or tracts to those he meets on the street. As you intercede for the individuals whom this missionary encounters, pray that the gospel message he sows with them will be a seed (watered perhaps by others) that the Spirit will grow to maturity in surrender to the Savior.

In 1982, a Hindu mob destroyed the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, India. Conflicts between Hindus and Muslims here date back more than 400 years, and tensions remain high today. Muslims make up some 20 percent of the population in this state. Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead the Muslims of Uttar Pradesh to a relationship with Christ.

Pray for the completion of the Old Testament translation into the Turkmen language. Every year is a challenge due to the restrictiveness of Turkmenistan and the fact that the translation team members live in several different countries. Pray that the work will be finished in 2010 so that more than 5 million Turkmen will be able to read God's Word in their heart language and respond to it in faithful obedience.

Not long ago in Southern Sudan cases of HIV/AIDS were rare. Now the disease is convincing people that sexual immorality is acceptable, so cases of HIV/AIDS are rapidly increasing. Pray for God's continued direction in the beginning stages of the HIV/AIDS education program in Southern Sudan as missionaries seek to teach godly decision making and God's plan for redemption.

Pray for Muslim women on the move up in their world. Wanting to improve their lives, they choose to further their education and upgrade their skills. Some end up in countries with large Christian populations where they have the opportunity to hear the Good News. Pray for these women to meet believers whose lives and words bear witness to Jesus Christ.

**CHRISTMAS DAY**  
As many celebrate Christmas with their families, pray for the wisdom, means and action of the worldwide body of Christ to rise up to meet the challenges of providing for the masses of AIDS orphans in the world.

Many South Asian Muslim seekers are on the brink of accepting or rejecting God's provision for them. They have heard and understood the Truth, but are hesitating mostly rooted in fear. Ask God to remove the fear and fill them with confident faith. Pray for patience for the Muslim-background believers who continue to answer their questions, and to offer encouragement from their own lives.

(1) Legislative Prayer Breakfast; Baptist Building, 7:30-8:30 a.m. Pray for our legislators to see their decisions as accountable to God (CAC); (2) 7-9 Baptist Building AT HOME DAYS.

Azerbaijan is a former Soviet republic located in the Caucasus Mountain region on the western shore of the Caspian Sea. After more than 40 years of communist rule, the more than 8 million Azeri Muslims hunger to know truth. Pray for the Holy Spirit to soften Azeri hearts to His Word and His servants. Pray that they will recognize and believe the truth.

Missionaries serving in J'burg, South Africa, report that L, who is 17, and N, who is 2, have been orphaned by AIDS. L is in the eleventh grade and has to care for his sister. There are no family members willing to help them. Please pray for God to intervene in their lives and for the local church as they minister to them and that they will come to know God as their Father.

Islam is a way of life for some 58 million Egyptians. Less than .01 percent of the population of Egypt is Christian. However, in recent years the Christian population has grown in number and in spiritual depth. Some Christians are sharing the gospel more boldly. Pray for the Muslims of Egypt to hear, understand and respond to the gospel.

A new Indonesian believer shared, "I strongly felt the urge to share with Mr. D about our Savior ... but I hesitated because of fear ... then, the Holy Spirit came to me and said, 'Why do the angels in heaven rejoice? Is it because a servant of God stays safe and comfortable, or is it because a little one comes to faith?' I found Mr. D and shared the gospel!"

**NEW YEAR'S DAY**  
"Make Your Will" month (MBF emphasis). Pray for God's guidance in how your material assets should be used both currently and at your death. Plan to have all of your business affairs in order in a way that will glorify God before this year ends.

Thousands of Riau Malayu live on the islands just off the east coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. The majority of these people are Muslim; the remainder practice a form of animism. Pray for God to send His servants and His Word to the Riau Malayu people. Pray for them to find acceptance, love, joy and peace in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

(1) 2010 MBCB Budget, Planning, Ganaywa (FS); (2) There are 110,000 Salar Muslims of China. Like many other Muslim women, the Salar women wear a physical veil to cover their heads, but spiritually, they are also veiled because they do not see that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Pray that this spiritual veil will be lifted so they can realize the incredible love the Lord has for them.

"A voice is heard in Africa, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more" (adaptation of Jeremiah 31:15). About 18 percent of the world's total population lives in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet 70 percent of the world's HIV/AIDS population lives there. Pray for comfort.

AIDS is an unfortunate reality in the everyday life of many South Africans. With close to a 35 percent infection rate in the country, few families are left untouched. Please pray for the people of South Africa, asking that they will hear God's Word during the AIDS crisis, and pray that they will feel God's love through their pastors, their church members and the missionaries.

The 8 million Minangkabau are the largest people group living on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. They are known as one of the most fervent Muslim people groups in Indonesia. Pray for them to know and fear God, to reflect their own sinfulness, and to recognize that Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself to give them victory over sin and death. Pray for them to follow Him.

The 16 million Ansari are the largest Muslim people group in India, and they are also found in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. Ask God to send laborers to work among the Ansari and to prepare Ansari hearts to receive the Good News they will proclaim. Pray for the Ansari to commit their lives to the Master Weaver.

There was a significant movement to Christ among the 70 million Javanese Muslims in the 1960s and 1970s, but a vast number of Javanese do not know who Jesus is or what He has done for them. Pray for the good news of God's sacrificial love to be spread abroad and talked about in every Javanese city, town and village. Pray for another great spiritual awakening to sweep the island of Java.

(1) Mississippi Baptist Symphony Orchestra Festival, Madison, 9th-10th (CM); (2) Of Kerala, India's 6,400,000 Mapila Muslims, several thousand have turned to Christ. However, millions more have never heard. Pray that the Lord will give local Christians and the Mapila believers the burden and the wisdom to reach out to the Mapilas with His love.

For women who are HIV-positive, 83 percent live in Africa, and 87 percent of the world's children who are HIV-positive live in Africa. Pray for a move of God's spirit to stop the spread of this horrible disease through whatever means He chooses. Pray for the spread of the gospel and its message of eternal hope among those already infected.

Approximately 1.3 billion Muslims live in every region and most countries of the world. While the Middle East is the birthplace of Islam and an important center of Islamic influence, the largest Muslim populations are found in Central, South and Southeast Asia. There are an estimated 5 million Muslims in the United States. Pray for a move of God's Spirit among Muslims.

Join workers in a small city in Turkey who have asked the Lord to give them 25 believers—friends and neighbors who realize that Jesus Christ is more than a prophet. Pray for them to respond to the witness of this couple and to surrender to Jesus Christ as not only the Savior whom God has provided for mankind, but their own Savior and Lord.

The Salar women of China wear a physical veil to cover their heads. Spiritually, their hearts and spirits are also veiled and unable to understand that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Pray for the spiritual veil to be lifted from the minds, hearts and spirits of Salar women, enabling them to experience the incredible love of Jesus Christ, their redeemer King.

Muslims of Gauteng province in South Africa fall into four categories. Pray for a missionary who will facilitate an evangelistic approach to reach all Muslims here to be guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit as plans for outreach are made. Pray that Muslims of the Loma and Laudum townships will have a chance to hear the gospel message and experience the love of Christ soon.

The 2 million Jaalyn people of the Sudan claim to be direct descendants of the prophet Muhammad. They live in small villages and cities along the banks of the Nile River. Very few of the Jaalyn have been exposed to the gospel. Ask God to send His witnesses and His Word to the Jaalyn. Pray for them to listen to the gospel with hungry hearts and to respond in faith.

**Please Note: Cancelled Event - Oasis - Spiritual Renewal for Youth Ministers**  
First Baptist Church, Brandon: January 8-9, 2009

# HOUSE TOPS



# Montanans building on foundation of Miss. Baptists

By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor

"Mississippi Baptists have helped us build buildings. Now we need help to build the body."

That's the challenge issued by Sam Birky, associational missionary with the Glacier Southern Baptist Association in Missoula, Montana, to a group of education ministers and pastors at the Metro Association offices in Jackson Nov. 13.

Glacier Association is made up of 32 Southern Baptist churches, in a land area approximately 200 by 300 miles. The whole of Montana is home to roughly 130 Southern Baptist churches.

Mississippi Baptist fingerprints are all over this part of Montana. Of the 32 churches in Glacier association, 17 began as Mississippi Baptist church starts. Robert and Elaine Wall of Brookhaven were instrumental in planting Easthaven Church in Kalispell, in 1964. Easthaven — which claims as its namesake Easthaven Church in Brookhaven — is the state's second largest Southern Baptist Church with over 600 members.

Between Easthaven Church in Kalispell, and Libby Church, in Libby, Mt., 15 additional churches were started since then.

"Building leaders in those churches is the next level," said Larry Garner, director of church services for Metro Association. Garner put together an "advance team" of Mississippi Baptist to visit Glacier Association and many of its churches, to help determine needs among the pastors and churches.

The group, consisting of Jim Gifford of First Church, Clinton; Cindy Sansing of Liberty Church, Flowood; this writer; and Garner traveled to western Montana on Nov. 1-8.

Glacier Association contains two of the seven urban areas in the state — Missoula and Kalispell. It also contains five of the top ten counties — Missoula, Flathead, Ravalli, Lake, and Lincoln. Thirty-one percent of the population — 295,141 — make Glacier Association home.

"We have about 2,500 church members in Glacier," Birky pointed out. "That's less than one percent of the population. Most of our pastors are in the largest church they've ever pastored and few of them are from Montana, but many are seminary trained."

What further impacts these churches is that many of the pastors are first-generation Christians. They have no con-



**LEADING IN WORSHIP** — Children and youth at Valley Church in Hungry Horse, Mt., lead in worship during their regular Wednesday night meeting on Nov. 5. The church, meeting in a former bar and casino, has virtually no adults involved in its ministries. (Photo by Tony Martin)

text from which to draw to know what a growing church is supposed to look like. They have never been personally disciplined or mentored.

To that end, Birky is developing a strategy to move the pastors to the next level. In the meeting on Nov. 13, he shared with the attendees that those pastors needed to be mentored, that they need to develop both as leaders and to develop leaders in their own churches, to expand their resources, and to send out missionaries.

The challenges are significant. One example is Lakeview Church in Polson, pastored by Kevin Rettig. It has now been just over five months since he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a cancer of the blood plasma which is produced by cancerous bone marrow.

Rettig is one of the few pastors who are natives of Montana; he was raised in Polson. "We're a 30-year-old church," said Rettig. "The church went through a split in 2003. On a typical Sunday, we have attendance in the high teens to low 20's but last Sunday, we had over 30."

"We are placing a real emphasis on prayer," Rettig said. "We are praying for a total revitalization of the church. Leadership is a real need. We just want to emphasize evangelism and basic discipleship."

Another example is North Valley Church in Columbia Falls. Pastor Rick Rhubottom is the founding pastor of this church, which was built primarily by Mississippi Baptist volunteers. "We need to

develop male leaders," said Rhubottom. To that end, he is cultivating two men to serve as the church's first deacons.

One of the most unique churches visited was Canyon Church in Hungry Horse. The church has virtually no adults — only children and youth. On a Wednesday night visit, there were 41 children and teenagers present, with a mere handful of adults and no parents of the children. The church is pastored by Jim Burdett who, along with his wife Mary, envisioned Canyon Church as a safe haven for the children of the community and a way to reach the community itself through its kids.

Many of the children attending the church come from difficult home situations. One area of town where many of them live is known informally as "Felony Flats," a neighborhood made up of ancient travel trailers and decrepit mobile homes. One home had an orange glow beaming from all its windows. The owners had placed a wood burning stove in the center of the floor and had cut a hole through the roof for the chimney.

Two young boys were living in a tiny travel trailer adjacent to another trailer in which their grandparents lived. One young girl asked this writer, "Are you a nice person, because not all grownups are nice."

Yet in the midst of such difficulty, God is at work. During the Wednesday night services, the children were divided into age groups for a time of Bible study. Many of them were well-versed in

Scripture. After their age group activities, they gathered in the worship area of the church. The building occupied by the church had once been a bar, casino, restaurant, and perhaps even a brothel.

Now, because of the work of volunteers — including, but not exclusively, Alta Woods Church, Jackson; Broadmoor Church, Madison; and First Church, Flora have all contributed through construction, sports camps, and Vacation Bible Schools — lives are being changed. Worship was upbeat and exciting. While discipline problems had been prevalent in the past, the children for the most part willingly entered into activities.

Birky's strategy includes bringing the group of ten individuals who met Nov. 13 to the association to spend one week with the churches as coaches. They would seek to understand the cultural and spiritual context of the churches, assess the needs and leadership of the church, prescribe a ministry plan and process, and then implement the plan and process.

"We want to move the churches from present reality to God's preferred future," he said.

*Editor's note: For more information on Montana ministry opportunities, contact Ken Rhodes, Missions Mobilization Director, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3239 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 239. E-mail: krhodes@mbcb.org.*

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# Brazil missionary given top honor for work with poor



INTO THE FAVELAS — Eric Reese (left), International Mission Board missionary in Brazil, was recently awarded the Pedro Ernesto Medal of Merit by the city of Rio de Janeiro. Reese, a Georgia native and former Texas pastor, and his wife Romana have worked in the favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro for seven years to reach people for Christ. (IMB photo)

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Eric Reese, a Southern Baptist missionary serving in Brazil through the International Mission Board (IMB), has been awarded the Pedro Ernesto Medal of Merit by the city of Rio de Janeiro in recognition of his work with the poor in that area. Also honored was Carlos Novaes, pastor of Barão de Taquara Baptist Church in Brazil.

Presented during a ceremony

Nov. 11, the medal is the highest honor conferred by the city to its citizens and foreigners who have rendered meritorious services. The award is named for Pedro Ernesto Baptista, a former mayor of Rio de Janeiro who labored to improve conditions in the city's slums during the 1930s.

Reese and his wife Ramona work with the urban poor in the favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro. Shootouts, prostitu-

tion, and drug trafficking accelerate their urgency to share Jesus.

"My phone has been tapped before because I was having so many conversations with drug traffickers," Reese said. "Some people thought, 'This gringo is crazy, so we need to get rid of him.' I might be crazy. About seven people die in the favelas every week. I put signs on the back of my truck that say, 'Jesus loves you' and 'Smile,'

but one thing I know. I know Jesus, and I'm gonna preach His name."

Into the Favelas, a video produced by the International Mission Board, helped garner public interest in Reese's work. While the Pedro Ernesto Medal is an encouragement, Reese said he was even more elated Sept. 6 when 51 city commissioners agreed to help turn Rio de Janeiro "from a place of terror to a place of peace."

"I feel like Brazilians have honored me as well," Reese said of their commitment. Many of them, he said, "have become more bold in their faith."

Reese's voice cracks when he thinks about the dangers he has survived. "I'm passionate about my work. Back when I was in the Army, fighting and jumping out of airplanes... I told God I'd do the same for Him."

Knowing of the spiritual battlefield Reese steps into daily, IMB missionary Guy Key calls Reese a committed Christ-follower. "Eric is a person of integrity and works hard at mentoring a church-planting team to reach our city. He has encouraged young people to make a commitment to mission service and has seen several follow through with this."

"Ramona is also a gracious missionary who keeps her priorities straight with God, fami-

ly, and ministry... in that order," Key said.

Reese agreed with the compliment of his wife, saying, "If it weren't for Ramona Reese who prays for me, who's being at home and worrying about me... she's the backbone of what I do. I sometimes hear her gather our kids together and say, 'We're gonna pray for Daddy before he leaves.'"

A former pastor of Cedarcliff Church in Cedar Hill, Texas, Reese originally is from Albany, Ga., where he received a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Albany State University. He also earned a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He and Ramona were appointed missionaries to South America in November 1999. They have two children.

*Editor's note: The ministry of the Reeses in Rio de Janeiro is profiled in this year's emphasis for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. To read their story, go to the Nov. 26 edition of Baptist Press at [www.sbc Baptist Press.org](http://www.sbc Baptist Press.org).*

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## COLLEGE AND SEMINARY NEWS

1. The Lucile Parker Gallery at William Carey University will present "Nativity Scenes From Around the World" December 1 through 11 from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. on the Hattiesburg campus. The nativities and crèches were collected by faculty, staff, students and friends of the university and have origins from around the world. Native American Indian, Latin American, animal likenesses, glass, clay, wood, paper mache, and many other unique pieces will be on display. The public is invited to view the exhibit admission free. To arrange a private viewing for other than the posted time, call (601) 318-6528 or 318-6192.
2. Trustmark Bank executive Art Stevens will be the guest speaker at a Dec. 4 11:30 a.m. luncheon to honor the 70 Mississippi College students inducted into the Who's Who Among Students at America's colleges and universities.
3. The Mississippi College School of Business dedicated the Eddie Kinchen Financial Services Lab Nov. 17. It is a state-of-the-art classroom with the latest tickers streaming real-time financial information and 46-inch screens displaying stock market quotes and CNBC business news.
4. Dozens of debaters from around the South will verbally spar in fall competition at Mississippi College. A panel of judges will decide who's best among some of the region's top collegians entering the Deep South Debate Tournament Dec. 5-6. MC's Debate Team and the Communication Department will sponsor the competition in Aven, Self, MCC and Hederman halls. MC has hosted the debate tournament the past four years.

5. The William Carey University Theatre will present their annual children's show Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse, by Kevin Henkes December 18 and 19, at 7 p.m. and December 20 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the O. L. Quave Theatre on the Hattiesburg campus. The show, based on the popular children's book, is adapted for the stage by Kevin Kling. The show is co-sponsored by the Hattiesburg Arts Council. Tickets are \$5 each. The box office opens December 15 and is open Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. Call (601) 318-6221 for reservations.

6. Mississippi College recently dedicated the Hawk Family Executive Conference Room. MC School of Business Dean Marcelo Eduardo, Hawk family members and others gathered for the occasion on Monday Nov. 24.



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# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## God's Missionary Heart

Isaiah 49:1-6; 56:3-8; 66:18-20, 23

By Bill Patterson

172,800. That's 7,200 per hour. That's how many people die in our world in an average day. Most die without Christ. Each one is someone's son or daughter, someone's brother or sister. Does God want these to know Him? Of course He does. His heart's desire is for all to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4).

God is a missionary God. He began this world in order to share His love with us. He sent His Son to provide the way of salvation. Jesus is a missionary. He left the glories of heaven to provide us the way to the Father. The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. He still convicts and converts the lost. The Bible is a missionary Book. It is the record of God's redemption of man and is our training manual as Great Commission Christians.

If you have the heart of God you are on mission with Him to reach others with the good news.

### A Light for All Nations (Isa. 49:1-6)

The last third of Isaiah often mentions the Servant of the Lord. That servant is sometimes Israel and sometimes the Messiah. His initial job was to restore Jacob/Israel to the Lord (v. 5a). Their poor response caused the Servant to cry out, "I have labored in vain." His service was then extended to those who would respond more readily. He was and is "a light to the nations, that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (v. 6).

The word nations can be translated "peoples." The International Missions Board has recognized that many

nations have several groups and have begun to strategize to reach the people groups. God desires the light of His Word penetrate the darkness of every people group.

The phrase in verse two, "He made my mouth like a sharp sword," is a reference to the word of the Lord. Both Old and New Testaments refer to the sword of the Lord as being His Word. By that Word, lost people come under conviction and come to know Him.

### Inclusion for the Excluded (Isa. 56:3-8)

These verses about foreigners may seem strange to you. Many in Isaiah's day, however, considered foreigners to have other gods and, therefore, not candidates for the Lord's salvation. In Mark 11:17 Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 to show the temple was to be a "house of prayer for all the nations." (NASB)

Likewise, the emphasis on eunuchs being eligible for salvation may seem strange to the

modern mind. In days of Isaiah, though, many opposed letting anyone who was deformed be a part of the worshipping community. They could even cite scriptures such as Deuteronomy 23:1 to support their position. The Servant, however, opened the way to all who would follow the covenant. This was especially important in the days of exile when many Jews were forced to become eunuchs to serve in the courts of Babylon and Persia.

The Ethiopian eunuch was reading the scrolls of the latter part of Isaiah when deacon Philip came up to his chariot to interpret (Acts 8). Philip explained Isaiah 53:7 and 8, a prophecy about Jesus "led as a sheep to the slaughter." After the Ethiopian's baptism, he continued reading the scroll as he traveled back to Ethiopia. Imagine how he felt when he read that, although a foreigner and a eunuch, he was still included by the Lord.

You will never meet a person God won't save if they humbly repent and receive

Jesus. Red or yellow, black, brown, or white, all are precious in His sight.

### Worshiped by the Nations (Isa. 66:18-20, 23)

How thrilling to think of the day when "all mankind will come to bow down before Me" (Isa. 66:23c, NASB). Does it bring to mind Paul's writing of a time when "every knee shall bow" (Phil. 2:10-11, NASB)? Or, you may recall John's vision of the end times when there will be a great multitude standing before the throne of God "from every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. 7:9, NASB). It is clear that God's concern is for all the peoples of the world.

In chapter 66, Isaiah saw the fulfillment of God's extending light to the nations (49:1-6) and including the excluded (56:3-8). Since God's heart is for the nations, our hearts must be for the nations. We can be Great Commission Christians with hearts, prayers, and witness for the world.

Patterson is pastor of First Church, Richland.

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## When You Started Out

I Thessalonians 1:1-10

By Joyce C. Rogers

Today's lesson begins a unit on I & II Thessalonians: Good Words for Growing Christians. These epistles were written in response to the good news Timothy brought Paul about the Thessalonians. The exact date is uncertain, but apparently it was between 50 A.D. and 52 A.D.

The great city of Thessalonica in Paul's day was situated at a crossroad of East and West called the Via Egnatia. It was the leading seaport of Macedonia. Christianity spread rapidly from there throughout the known world.

Paul responded to the vision of a Macedonian man saying "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9 NIV). He preached in the synagogue only three Sabbaths (Acts 17:2 NIV). He probably spent additional time preaching among the Gentiles. The church was

apparently made up of mostly Gentiles. Many came to faith, but persecution forced Paul to leave. Later he sent Timothy back to see how the Thessalonians were doing.

### Recognizing God's Works

Paul began his letter in the customary manner with a signature including Silas and Timothy. He gave a brief greeting to the church "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 1:1 NIV). He addresses both Greek and Jewish believers in saying "grace" and "peace." Grace in the New Testament refers to God's provision of salvation for sinners, a gift undeserved and unearned. "Peace" is also God's gift. The Hebrew "shalom" expresses the idea of peace, well being, restoration, reconciliation with God and salvation in its fullest sense (Holman Bible Dictionary). The peace that God gives is not

necessarily a cessation of conflict. The peace that God gives is an inner peace that may be given in the midst of conflict.

Paul expresses gratitude for the faith, love and endurance God has produced in the lives of the believing Thessalonians. He continually remembers them in his prayers.

How we should thank God and praise Him for what He does in the lives of believers today! Recently I went with my husband to the state chaplains' banquet held every year in connection with the MS State Baptist Convention. Chaplain after chaplain stood to relate a recent experience of God's grace and blessing.

Paul had been anxious to know if the Thessalonians were standing firm in their faith despite the persecution which caused his own departure. Timothy's report reassures him that they have, indeed, remained faithful. The transforming work of the Holy Spirit is evident in their lives.

In verse three Paul speaks of the "work of faith, labor of love, and endurance inspired by hope." These three Christian virtues are expressed in I Cor. 13:13. In Jesus the Christian reaches out in love to all men. God's love for us and our love for Him may be expressed as vertical. Out love for others is horizontal, forming a cross. The cross of Jesus is basic to our faith, symbolizing God's plan to provide salvation for sinful man.

God initiates the process of salvation. He chooses us. We choose to respond or not to respond.

### Responding to the Spirit

The gospel message came to the Thessalonians with power and deep conviction by the Holy Spirit. That deep conviction enabled them to remain faithful through severe suffering and persecution.

Paul modeled how a believer's life should be lived. He surely told them of Jesus' life, who is the supreme example.

God drew the Thessalonians to Himself and the Holy Spirit convicted them. They experienced joy despite hardship. I

think of the love of God expressed in that wonderful hymn, "The Love of God."

### Influencing Others

The good news, the gospel, became known far and wide because of the faith of the Thessalonians. Their location along the Via Egnatia helped the spread of the gospel. The Greek verb translated "rang out" (v. 8 NIV) and "sounded out" (v. 8 KJV) means to sound as a trumpet, to thunder, to reverberate like an echo. The report of their faith was heard everywhere!

After leaving Thessalonica, Paul found that the gospel preceded him wherever he went. It was told that the Thessalonians turned from idols to worship the true and living God. They were waiting for Jesus to return from heaven. God had raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus would be the one to save them from the coming wrath of God.

May our lives also be a testimony to the transforming power of God and the Holy Spirit!

Rogers is a member of Main Street Church, Hattiesburg.

# Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

# The Baptist Record





## MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS



1. Macedonia Church GAs



2. Williams ordination



3. Calvary Church note burning



4. RAs and Crusaders, Rocky Point Church

1. GAs from Macedonia Church, Lincoln County, recently learned how missionaries use the World Craft program to help the poor in countries all over the world.

2. Gillsburg Church, Gillsburg recently ordained Daniel Williams as deacon. Shown are Beau Williams, Wanda Williams, Madelyn Williams, Williams, and Chris Teasley.

3. Calvary Church, Oak Grove, burned the note on their debt Nov. 23. Shown are Greg Davis, Bill Leggett, Chuck Mitchell, Don Paschal, and pastor Jeff Floyd.

4. The RAs of Rocky Point Church, Leake Association, received their leadership vests and loyalty bars, and the Crusaders received their membership vests and faith bar Nov. 5.

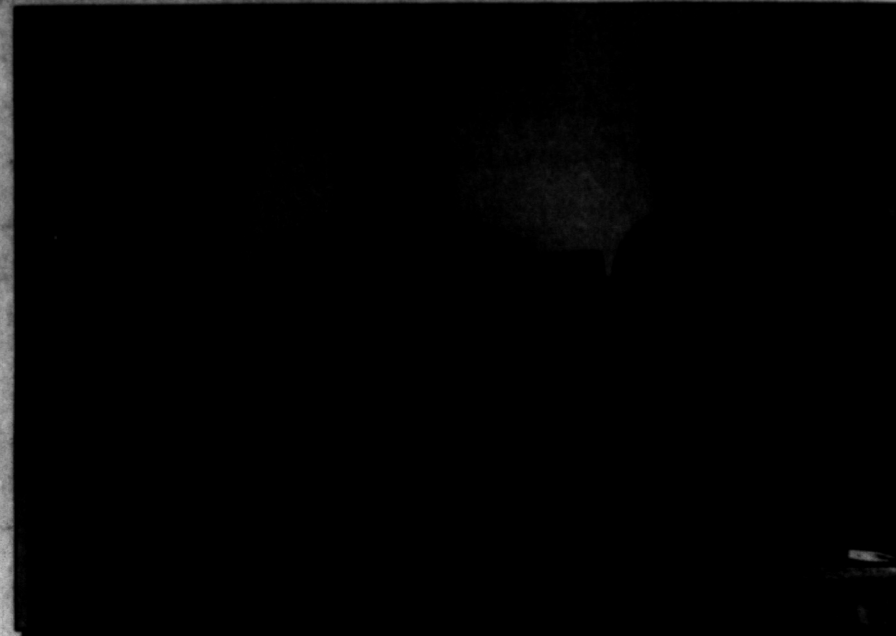
5. DeSoto Church, Clarke County, celebrated its 150th anniversary Oct. 17 - 19. Shown are pastor Keith Tankersley (center) and Historical Committee chairman Dick Younger (left) receiving a commemorative plaque from Mike Everett (right) who represented the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission.

6. Beulah Church, Newton County, presented pins for perfect Sunday School attendance to (from left) Laverne Chaney, 31 years; Barbara J. Harrison, 26 years; Will Motley, 31 years; Neal Motley, 39 years; and Elton Bryan, 15 years. Keith Ramage, pastor.

7. The 8 - 12 year old Sunday School class of Sand Hill Church, West, presented a check for \$659 from a bake sale held Oct. 6 to the church for the purchase of choir robes. Shown are the participants.

8. The choir of Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, is presenting Night of Alleluias, Dec. 13, 6 p.m. and Dec. 14, 11 a.m.

9. New Sight Church, Brookhaven, is presenting its 1st Annual Live Nativity Dec. 12, 6 - 9 p.m. and Dec. 13, 5 - 8 p.m. For more information, call (601) 833-2422. Calvin Price, pastor.



5. DeSoto Church 150th anniversary



6. Beulah Church, Newton County



7. Sand Hill Church, West

10. New Hope Church, Foxworth, will host The Provisionals Quartet in concert Dec. 7, 6:30 p.m. A love offering will be received.

11. Shivers Church, Shivers, will celebrate its 100 year anniversary of being located on its present site Dec. 14. Service, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and a tour of the new church building. A love offering will be taken for the building fund.

12. Cleary Church, Florence, is hosting the Children of the World Choir in concert Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. The choir is comprised of orphaned and disadvantaged children from several different countries.

13. The Down East Boys will be in concert at the Family Life Building, Covington-Jeff Davis Association, Collins, Dec. 11, and at Faith Church, Florence, Dec. 14, 6 p.m. For information, call (601) 845-8940 or 503-0677.